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IN KENYA AND UGANDA

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Like virtually every other social activity today in both countries, the establishment and development of television in Kenya and Uganda have their rationale in the putative function of television as an instrument of national cohesion. That television is especially fitted to serve this function is taken for granted, not only in official quarters but by anyone in either country to whom one might speak on the subject. It is, indeed, an attitude common to all Africa.

Thus, the "recommendations" of the first international conference on television to be held in Africa, the Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa, in Lagos, in September 1964, began with the words: "Recognizing that, especially in developing countries, television is potentially more powerful in its impact than any other form of mass communication"¹ The first recommendation of the Meeting reads: "1. That, with the object of promoting national unity, (a) African broadcasting authorities should use every appropriate type of television programme which can help to bind the nation together culturally, intellectually, and economically."²

1. UNESCO, Report of Meeting on the Introduction and Development of Television in Africa, Lagos, Nigeria, 21-29, September 1964 (Paris), p. 3.

2. Ibid.

Lest this seem too vague a statement of the relationship between TV and national cohesion, the second clause of the first recommendation stipulated that "(b) such programmes should serve the aims of the nation as a whole, rather than sections determined by geographic, ethnic, economic or social considerations, but great care should be taken to preserve the indigenous cultural heritage of ethnic groups within the country."¹

One occasionally hears from well-intentioned outsiders, even persons with substantial technical familiarity with TV efforts in Kenya and Uganda, that the true motive of the Governments which instituted such an inherently expensive service so quickly was the pursuit of prestige, internal and external. This assessment undoubtedly is correct, but the conception of TV as prestigious is itself a testament to the belief that TV has unusual nation-building qualities. For what gives prestige to having TV is the belief that to have it is to be that much farther along on the road to modernity, and modernity is the hallmark of the well-established national state. Again, one may refer to the Recommendations of the Lagos Meeting. Still under the general heading of the phrase, "with the object of promoting national unity", there follows the recommendation: "television should be used as a motivating force for social development, for the modernization of methods, for stimulating initiative and popular participation in cultural, social and

1. Ibid.

related activities, particularly on the part of youth¹"

What TV can, in fact, contribute to greater national cohesion as it assists modernizing policies in Kenya and Uganda, while at the same time it is employed to preserve the indigenous cultural heritage of the many ethnic groups in both Kenya and Uganda, is very much an open question. All that anyone can do presently is to analyze the relevant factors and point out tendencies.

Television was instituted in Kenya in October 1962, some fifteen months prior to the independence of the country; in Uganda, in October 1963, one year after independence. It is, therefore, very new in both countries and its promise as a force for nation-building is certainly no more at this time than a promise. This is not to say that TV has thus far been insignificant as a public phenomenon in either Kenya or Uganda. In Kenya it has already been an important political issue reflective of the distinctive features of Kenya's transition from dependency to independence. And in both countries, with its enjoyment concentrated in a few and mainly "foreign" hands, it has actually had negative consequences from the standpoint of the fostering of national cohesion. Since these negative consequences have an economic source, they can eventually be overcome, although the longer they persist, the more likely are they to have a negative social impact. In both countries

1. Ibid.

it will be difficult, at best, despite the hope expressed at the Lagos Meeting, to devise the kind of TV programming which, as it assists in modernization, can be manipulated to serve at the same time the objectives of greater national cohesion and the preservation of the various indigenous cultural heritages.

The two objectives may not be in outright contradiction, but there is clearly a tension between them, and it is this tension upon which the present paper is focused. Each country, moreover, must handle the tension by substantially different specific means, for the difference in their cultural cleavage patterns have given rise to different problems of public policy, notwithstanding their territorial juxtaposition and the many similar, even common, features of their political and economic history during the past seventy years. The following comparative discussion, therefore, is offered as a brief assessment of the effects of the different conditions and outlooks of nation-building in Kenya and Uganda upon their current and prospective TV broadcasting systems.

Kenya's Experiment with Commercial Television

Undertaken prior to independence, TV in Kenya was at first a semi-private enterprise. This initial period of Kenya's TV history, which ended with the nationalization of both television and radio facilities and operations on July 1, 1964, deserves extended comment, for it is part of the personal experience of many who are now employed in the government-run system. Moreover, it contrasted markedly with, and provided perspective

for, the decision of the government of Uganda, independent at the time it inaugurated TV service, to place the service from the outset under the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism.

¹
The Nairobi area, with more than 300 thousand residents, ² well over half of whom are Asian and European, offered by far the most attractive commercial TV prospect in East Africa.

On the Kenya Government's side, a Commission, under the chairmanship of Commander J.C.R. Proud, recommended in December, 1959, that a TV service be introduced within eighteen months to two years and that radio (then under the Kenya Broadcasting Service, a Government agency) and TV broadcasting should be ³ controlled by a single, independent authority. One year later, the Government announced its intention, in line with the report of the Proud Commission, to introduce a TV service as soon as possible - independent, but not controlled by commercial interests. At the same time, the capital to finance the services ⁴ would be sought from commercial sources. The key term, clearly was "controlled", but before describing the device decided upon to keep TV and radio broadcasting independent, yet free from control by the commercial interests that would provide the money and administration, it is desirable to note the contemporary

1. The Nairobi area includes Nairobi City and Extra-Provincial Nairobi.

2. The 1962 Kenya census gives 311,956 people for Nairobi City and Extra-Provincial Nairobi. Of these, 169,454 were by ethnic origin Indo-Pakistani, Goan and European.

3. See K.B.C. Commission of Enquiry Report, January 16, 1964, issued by the Kenya News Agency, Press Office Handout No. 76, p. 3.

4. Ibid. See also First Annual Report of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, July 1962 - June 1963, p.6.

political background of Kenya.

Not until 1960 did a British Government commit itself to African majority rule, and, while independence was thus fore-shadowed, the acrimonious aftermath of the Mau Mau uprising and suppression, which divided not only Africans from Europeans but Africans from Africans, held off any British agreement to independence until after Britain was first persuaded to accept a Kenyatta government at the end of May, 1963. Thus, the inauguration of TV in Kenya occurred at a transitory moment, when a private contractor was able to negotiate an agreement with a government not yet fully in control even of domestic affairs and divided in its composition between leaders of the Kenya African Democratic Union and the Kenya African National Union. In this coalition government, KADU, which only shortly before had ceased to be the sole governing party -- a status which had been made possible by KANU's refusal to support the current Constitution so long as Jomo Kenyatta was held in detention -- had a representation out of proportion to its strength in the country. Once the socialist-minded KANU came fully into power, many relationships were bound to change, and it would have been surprising if one of the first changes had not been the nationalization of an activity so fraught with political import as radio and TV broadcasting. Radio, to be sure, was the far more widespread medium then as now. But the two services were already under a single direction, and it was generally believed in Kenya that the visual quality of TV was bound to make it a profound influence in social life.

Having taken the decision to establish TV, the coalition government proceeded in November, 1961, to create a Corporation, which in turn selected a contractor to actually institute and operate the service. A few months later, by separate statute, the radio service¹ was also vested in the Corporation. The contractor was Television Network (Kenya) Ltd., a consortium of eight partners,² with Lord Roy Thomson, the Canadian newspaper and broadcasting magnate, its principal figure. Three of the members of the Board of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation were appointed by the Contractor, three initially by the Governor of Kenya to represent the public and three by the Governor to represent the interests of the Government. Subsequently the appointing role of the Governor was taken over by the Minister of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism. A Director-General, responsible to the Board, provided daily supervision of the activities³ of Television Network.

The Kenya Broadcasting Corporation was nationalized on July 1, 1964, following a very critical assessment of its performance by a Commission under the chairmanship of Mr. Benna Lutta, Deputy Legal Secretary of the East African Common Services Organization, and its TV and radio operations have since been carried on by the Voice of Kenya within the Ministry of Information, Broadcasting and Tourism. The Lutta Commission called for radical reform of the K.B.C. and its relations with Television Network, but it did not actually recommend nationalization. Had it been only the poor financial

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1. First Annual Report, 6.
 2. Television International Enterprise, Ltd., Scottish Television, National Broadcasting Company, Independent Television for South Wales and West of England, Ltd., Twentieth Century Fox Film Company, The Nakuru Press, Ltd., Northern Broadcasting Company of Toronto, Ltd., and East African Newspapers, Ltd.
 3. First Annual Report, 6.

showing of the K.B.C. after fifteen months of operation which had impressed the now independent Kenyatta Government, nationalization might not have occurred. It was, rather, the actual and possible political consequences of this semi-private operation and control of TV and radio which appears to have been decisive.

When Television Network had bid for the contract in 1962, it had pointed to its international character as exactly what the then Minister of Information and Broadcasting was looking for: a contractor representing "as wide international interests as possible to safeguard against the danger of a political party in power, after independence had been awarded, exploiting the Broadcasting System for its own political purposes, to the detriment of national¹ interests as a whole." Now there was a different Minister, and in the eyes of the Lutta Commission, it was just this requirement which made it "quite obvious that the creation of the K.B.C. was² motivated in the main by political considerations." (!) And, indeed, in 1962 which party did one anticipate would be the party in power after independence, which might exploit the Broadcasting System for its own political purposes? Surely, it would be the temporarily derailed but dominant political grouping in the country - KANU, the party now in power.

Whereas in both Kenya and Uganda radio has been reaching a very large audience, the "mass" attribute of TV is far from

1. K.B.C. Commission of Enquiry Report, 4.
2. Ibid., 5.

realization. In both countries the audiences are not only small minorities, but are predominantly non-African. To move toward a truly mass status for TV was one of the reasons for nationalization of the K.B.C.; to have political control was another. It has not been a rapid movement, and the obstacles to reaching a large audience throughout the country are still great. Funding, insufficient power facilities beyond the Nairobi area, and the concentration of ownership of TV sets, whose selling price is at the level of high-quality, large-screen American sets, among Europeans and Asians in the Nairobi area -- these were the conditions about which Television Network (Kenya) Ltd. might have tried to do something, but they were obviously not of its making. Whether the private businessmen who ran Kenya's broadcasting services did try in more than perfunctory fashion to alter these conditions is a matter of dispute among the interested parties. The Lutta Commission did not think so. The K.B.C. had lost money on both its radio and TV operations for the year 1962-63, the loss being especially large on the TV side, and it would have lost more if there had not been, by initial agreement, a large Government subvention. More important, perhaps, was the fact that the Corporation chose to aim its TV programs at the Europeans and Asians, an orientation inevitably reinforced by a revenue policy which relied on license fees assessed on the ownership of sets and on advertising payments. In the euphemistic words of its first and only annual report, the K.B.C. noted that "unfortunately the time necessary to create new programmes of specifically Kenyan flavor was not available, a matter of regret

as much to the KBC programme staff as to the general public." ¹

Later, faced with the threat of nationalization and attempting to head it off, the KBC endeavored to make its programming more attractive to Africans. To that end, in addition to introducing some Swahili language programs, the Corporation replaced its British director-general, Patrick Jubb, with George Cahan, of the National Broadcasting Company, one of the participants in the consortium. Cahan stayed on in a consultative capacity for a few months after nationalization and then returned to the United States. ²

Having chosen this narrow frame of reference for TV, in marked contrast to a radio service which covered the country and included European, African, Hindustani and two vernacular services, ³ the KBC lost £104,086 on TV during its first year of operation. ⁴ Of its two sources of revenue, license fees and advertising, the latter -- on which reliance had been especially placed -- proved to be very unreliable. As against the estimate of £96,000 made several months before the KBC operations commenced, and on the basis of which a profit on the TV side of £8,500 was projected, advertising brought in less than £26,000. By contrast, the expected loss of £68,000 on radio, notwithstanding a Government subvention of £171,000, proved overly pessimistic, the actual loss being only ⁵ £21,000.

1. First Annual Report of the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, July 1962 - June 1963, p. 11.

2. Cahan appears to have been highly regarded by the new officials and left presumably because he did not wish to remain away any longer from the American television scene.

3. Luo on the west, centered on Kisumu, and Swahili on the coast, centered on Mombasa.

4. See Income and Expenditure Account, in First Annual Report.

5. Ibid.

Population Patterns and Network Differences in Kenya and Uganda

TV in Uganda has been both more modest and more ambitious than in Kenya. Its modest aspect is seen in the relatively small cost at which service was established under the guidance of an American konsultant, Mr. Harry Engel. A consequence, however, in the view of later members of the technical staff, was the creation of a program schedule comparable in scope to Kenya's but with a much smaller resource base. In mid-summer, 1965, there was no spare equipment to replace other equipment in repair or to fill a gap created by sudden added demands. On the other hand, the spirit of economy which led the government to turn to an expert who would establish a going TV service within nine months, at the lowest possible cost, still dominates budget allocations for Uganda TV. Nevertheless, the Uganda government remains enthusiastic about the potential of TV for binding the diverse peoples of the country more closely into a nation and has therefore encouraged the creation of an elaborate relay system which, when fully operating, will reach most parts of the country.

The northern half of Kenya's 225 thousand square miles, comprising desert and semi-desert, is very thinly populated. Even in the south population is clustered in three widely separated areas: at the coast in the vicinity of Mombasa; in the highlands around and north of Nairobi; and in the west around the shores of Lake Victoria's Kavirondo Gulf. Corresponding to the pattern of population, the Voice of Kenya broadcasts TV programs from Nairobi and maintains a relay transmitter at Timbora, from which programs

are beamed to a station at Kisumu, the focal point of the Western Region. A second relay station at Mombasa is being planned for installation within the next year.

Much more restricted than the transmission pattern is the actual receiving pattern, which is a product, not only of differentials in interest among people of many cultures as to what TV appears to offer, but of the financial inability of most Africans to purchase TV receivers. The present transmission pattern, therefore, at best points to the future rather than to the present so far as the relevance of TV programming to national cohesion is concerned. Today, not only do all TV programs originate in the Nairobi studios of the Voice of Kenya, but by far most of the listeners¹ are in the greater Nairobi area. Even more significant for the influence of TV on national cohesion is the fact that the owners of some 9,000 TV receivers as of mid-1965 were predominantly Europeans and Indians,² most of whom live in the greater Nairobi area, of which they constitute well over half of the population.

There are several hundred African set owners, but by far most of the African listeners, in the Nairobi area and in the country at large, who listen to TV, listen to community sets. But fewer than 200 of these are in operation, bringing in an additional African audience of as many as 20,000.

Uganda is two-fifths the size of Kenya and has a population three-fourths as large and three times as densely settled. Most

1. Nairobi City and Extra-Provincial Nairobi.
2. Moslems and Hindus born on, or descendents of persons born on, the Indian sub-continent.

Ugandans, as most Kenyans, live in the southern part of their country, at about the midpoint of which on Lake Victoria lies the Kampala-Entebbe urban area. Differing from the Kenya pattern, a large number of Ugandans live in the center of the country, too, in a band of varying width running northwest from Mount Elgon on the Kenya border almost to the northern border with Sudan. Moreover, there is only one discontinuity -- a minor one -- in the distribution of the dense southern Ugandan population, which otherwise describes an undulating pattern of¹ between 1,000 and 100 per square mile.

As in Kenya, all of Uganda's TV programs originate in studios in the capital. Here, too, the transmission pattern points to the future rather than the present, for the vast majority of the privately owned receivers are to be found in the Kampala area, and most of these, again as in Kenya, are owned by Europeans and Indians. Moreover, Uganda-TV is planning to relay its programs to five regional stations, each of which will then broadcast within its locality.

Out from Kampala, these stations are: to the southwest, Masaka; Mbarara in the farther southwest; Mbale, northeast of Kampala near Mount Elgon; Soroti, northwest of Mbale; and Lira in the center of the country. On a map, this relay system has the appearance of a wide-mouthed "V" resting on its longer, southern side, its point at Mbale. It is a line which corresponds well to the rather continuous settlement that has been mentioned. However, not all of the

1. Excluding urban centers.

heavily populated regions of Uganda are covered by this network. Beyond its reach are the far southwestern, mountainous district of Kigesi, which borders on Rwanda and the Congo, and the far northwestern district of West Nile, which borders on the Congo and Sudan.

Ethno-Political Patterns and Network Differences

Population density constitutes only one of the factors which has led the Governments of Kenya and Uganda to establish different types of TV networks. Superimposed upon the density pattern in each country is a distinctive ethno-political pattern to which the location of relay stations corresponds.

About 20 per cent of the people of Kenya are Kikuyu; about 17 per cent of the people of Uganda are Baganda. Each is the largest ethnic group in its country but is, nevertheless, a regional people with a preponderance in the capital as a result of the fact that the capitals are located in Kikuyuland and Buganda. As national capitals, on the other hand, Nairobi and Kampala are now inhabited by very heterogeneous African populations, as well as by Indians and Europeans.

The numerical pre-eminence and adaptability to Western ways of the Kikuyu and Baganda place them in a similar position vis-a-vis other African groups who are wary of being dominated. Both peoples, moreover, are involved in old animosities and current clashes of interest with neighbors of different ethnic identification. However, the differences in the political positions of the Kikuyu and Baganda are more profound than these similarities. The Kikuyu are the principal ethnic component of what has continued to be the leading

political party in Kenya, guiding a government committed to a strong central administration. A Bantu people, their principal partner in the Kenya African National Union is the Nilotic Luo people of the Victoria Nyanza region. In contrast, the suspicion by their neighbors of the Baganda is a residue which, though alive as a suspicion, has been severely undermined as an actual danger by the success of an independence movement with which the principal leaders of the Baganda only latterly and reluctantly cooperated. In Uganda, it is the historically less powerful peoples who are centralized and who are suspicious of the motives of "parochial" Buganda.

Politically, Buganda has been a conservative element. Until April, 1966, it was a proud Bantu kingdom within a republic whose president was its own king (kabaka) and with various reserved powers unique to Buganda. Beginning in February, 1966, a rapid series of political moves and counter-moves produced a constitutional revolution. The constitution under which Uganda became independent has been abolished and virtual dictatorial powers have been assumed by Prime Minister Obote, who has taken the title of President of Uganda as well. The King of Uganda has refused to accept his deposition as President of Uganda, has denounced Obote's actions as illegal and void, and has fled the country. Bloody encounters between central government troops and supporters of the king have occurred in Kampala, where the palace of the king has been destroyed by artillery fire.

It would be sheer guesswork to comment upon the implications

of these very recent events for the public life of Uganda, including its TV programming. Since independence only the Government side among the political parties in Parliament had been permitted use of radio and TV for political purposes. By contrast, the Prime Minister went on TV during the crisis of last Spring. However, insofar as the crisis is a consequence of Baganda-non-Baganda animosities -- and it is only partly that, the Baganda themselves being divided over the question of the extent of the king's authority -- it may be expected that these political events will affect personnel policies in Uganda's radio and TV services. This would be technically as well as politically important, for the Baganda contribute most of the Africans to the broadcasting services, as they do to the modern sector of the economy generally. Whether programming will be directly affected remains to be seen, the most likely area being that of broadcasts in Luganda.¹

Returning to the system of TV stations in Uganda, one notes that Kampala, the capital of Buganda, but with a heterogeneous population, is the only site of program origination. The Lira station is located in Lango, the principal northern district and the country most exclusively of a Nilotic people from whom Obote himself derives. The Soroti station is in Teso, the home almost exclusively of the Iteso, a Nilo-Hamitic people. The Mbarara station is in the small kingdom of Ankole, like Buganda, a Bantu area but with much less influence than Buganda on the political and

1. Luganda is the form for the language of the Baganda, who are the people of Buganda.

economic life of the country. The Mbale station is in the district of Bugisu, almost entirely the home of another Bantu people, the Gisu, who, however, are sharply distinguished from the Buganda in language and other traits. The Masaka station is also in Buganda, but here even within the same kingdom an important cleavage is to be noted on religious grounds, Masaka being the principal town in a heavily Roman Catholic area, in contrast to a Protestant concentration in the Kampala area. This religious cleavage, moreover, has long had strong political overtones.

Bantus, Nilotes and Nilo-Hamites live in both Uganda and Kenya. Kenya has Hamites (Somalis and Gallas) as well. Below this broad level of ethnic differentiation, however, the politico-linguistic relationships in the two countries, and thus the linguistic characteristics of their TV networks, are markedly different.

With one exception, tribal and language boundaries in Kenya coincide, insofar as boundaries are recognized, which is not actually the case with certain peoples. The exception is that of the coastal Swahilis; their language, however, has become a lingua franca for the entire country. This is reflected in the Voice of Kenya's language policy. Nairobi transmits only English and Swahili programs, in an approximate 60-40 ratio. Although it is in Luo territory, Kisumu merely will relay in the transmitted language, whether English or Swahili, as will the projected Mombasa station. On the other hand, Luganda accompanied the spread of Buganda's political power in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, leaving a linguistic legacy far beyond the present boundaries of the kingdom. But, although many non-Baganda Bantus understand

Luganda, they reject it as an alien, conqueror's tongue. Luganda, therefore, is not available as a prospective national language. At the same time, Swahili has not become established as widely in Uganda as in Kenya. Nevertheless, it is spoken in some fashion by more persons than is any other language of the country. It is, however, a Bantu language, although with large numbers of Arabic and, more recently, English words in its vocabulary. And in Uganda, non-Bantu speakers dominate the central government. The result is that, whereas in Kenya Swahili is becoming increasingly competitive with English as a national language, although the latter remains the language of public administration, English has been chosen as the sole language for Uganda TV. Two or three programs per week are broadcast in Luganda for Baganda who prefer to hear their mother tongue rather than English; but, even apart from what the recent political upheaval may bring on this score, there was no intention to increase the Luganda service, which is destined actually to decline relatively as the multi-lingual relay system begins to operate.

Uganda's system of simulcasting will at first, at any rate, be used for national and international news broadcasts, the most popular of TV programs in the country. By means of this device, these languages will be transmitted simultaneously with the English sound and picture from Kampala. The three languages -- Lango, Ateso, and Banyankole -- will be carried in coded form on a "sub-carrier" along with the English sound. Banyankole sound will be decoded at the Mbarara station and radiated locally therefrom. Mbale will radiate Kampala broadcasts directly into its own

region, and it will also be picked up by Soroti, which will decode its own language, Ateso, and radiate it locally. Lira station, too, will pick up from Soroti and then radiate its sound, Lango, locally.

The Future of Swahili and TV in Kenya and Uganda

Since English is a school-learned language, some writers are dubious that it can adequately serve for a long time to come as a nation-building language in either Kenya or Uganda. Swahili, however, is the second language of many more people in these countries than English. Nor need it for speech and listening purposes be learned at school, attendance at which is still a goal rather than a present fact for large numbers of children in Uganda and Kenya. As the lingua franca of African commerce over a large area of Eastern Africa, including both Kenya and Uganda, Swahili in some fashion is known to more people than any other language spoken in either country. The government of Tanganyika has publicly espoused the establishment of Swahili as the national language. As already noted, President Kenyatta is eager to foster Swahili. In Uganda, too, then, the question of Swahili should not be regarded as closed.